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SUBJECT: UNRWA AND ICRC SUSPEND MOVEMENT IN GAZA FOLLOWING LETHAL
INCIDENTS WITH THE IDF

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On January 8, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) decided to suspend movements inside Gaza following several security incidents involving IDF strikes on UN and ICRC staff, vehicles, and facilities. UNRWA and ICRC will continue some operations in Gaza that do not require IDF coordination. On January 9, UNRWA Deputy Commissioner General Filippo Grandi told RefCoord that UNRWA will resume movement inside Gaza only with "full guarantees" from the GOI that staff can move safely. ICRC is seeking a new, more reliable coordination mechanism before it resumes movements. End Summary.

UNRWA Suspends Movement in Gaza

¶2. (SBU) On January 8, UNRWA Director for Gaza Operations John Ging suspended movement inside Gaza following several security incidents involving IDF strikes on UN vehicles and staff. UNRWA will continue to operate 27 emergency shelters housing 20,000 displaced people, distribute food from seven pre-positioned locations, and operate its primary health clinics. UNRWA will not, however, move its staff, coordinate the transfer of goods from the crossings, or deliver supplies from warehouses to distribution points.

¶3. (SBU) On January 9, UNRWA Deputy Director Aidan O'Leary detailed the security incidents that led to UNRWA's suspension of movements. These incidents demonstrated a pattern of IDF conduct that risked the lives of UN staff and contractors and vehicles, he said. O'Leary noted that all of the incidents occurred despite prior coordination with the IDF. UNRWA Deputy Commissioner General Filippo Grandi said UNRWA would only resume movement inside Gaza after "full guarantees" from the GOI that staff can move safely.

¶4. (SBU) O'Leary detailed the incidents as follows:

- On January 8, UNRWA provided UN escort (at IDF request) for Palestinian transport workers to Erez crossing in order to bring in commercial goods. One of the transport workers was shot and killed and another critically wounded while driving in a UN-marked vehicle and with prior coordination with the IDF/COGAT.

- On January 8, during the 3-hour "humanitarian pause," two UNRWA international staff traveled in an armored vehicle convoy (including an ambulance) to the Ezbet Abed-Rabou area of Gaza City to retrieve the body of an UNRWA staff member killed in the fighting. According to Ging, despite prior coordination with the IDF/COGAT, IDF soldiers opened fire on the convoy. Two bullets hit the armored vehicle, and the convoy returned to the Gaza field office.

- On January 7, an IDF tank fired rounds roughly 70 meters in front of the lead truck of a UN convoy heading to Kerem Shalom crossing.

After the convoy stopped, another round was fired above it. The convoy was ultimately allowed to proceed.

- On January 6, UN transport contractors were driving fuel tankers from Nahal Oz crossing to the Gaza power plant when artillery rounds were fired toward the tankers.

- On January 6, UNRWA's primary health clinic in Bureij Camp was struck by the IAF, wounding 6 UNRWA health workers.

- On January 6, IDF artillery struck the periphery of an UNRWA facility being used as an emergency shelter for 350 people, resulting in 40 fatalities and 55 injuries.

- On January 5, a UN convoy traveling to Kerem Shalom was held at an IDF checkpoint for 90 minutes and, on return to Gaza City, was held at an IDF checkpoint for 2 hours. As a result of nearby artillery shelling, 3,000 MT of flour was destroyed.

- On January 4 and 5, the compound of a Palestinian transport company contracted by the GOI and the UN was struck by IDF artillery, resulting in the deaths of three employees and several injured.

ICRC Suspends Most Movements in Gaza

15. (SBU) On January 8, ICRC Head of Office Katharina Ritz told RefCoord that the ICRC would suspend most operational movements inside Gaza because of repeated problems in coordinating movements with the IDF. She said that an ICRC truck, which was carrying

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medical supplies and escorting 13 ambulances on January 8, stopped short of an IDF tank. After a green light to proceed from IDF/COGAT, the convoy was fired on. A bullet through the windshield narrowly missed the ICRC driver.

16. (SBU) On January 9, Ritz reported that the ICRC would return to the Zaytun area of Gaza City to evacuate stranded residents. ICRC also intended to assess the medical situation in Rafah January 9, but might do this via telephone to avoid moving staff inside Gaza. Ritz also suggested that ICRC would resume movements inside Gaza only after the GOI agreed to a new mechanism, such as direct contact with the IDF operational command to provide more reliable, rapid coordination on the ground.

WALLES